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FIFTY-NINTH REG'T

New York Veteran Volunteer Infantry.

Report of Proceedings, Re-Union.

—AND—

ROSTER OF SURVIVING MEMBERS.

COMPILED BY THE SECRETARY,

D. A. O'MARA.

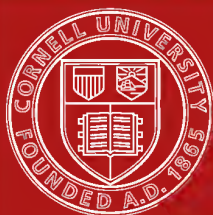
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PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

ASSOCIATED SURVIVORS

OF THE

Fifty-Ninth Reg't, N. Y. Vet. Vols.

First Annual Re-Union and Dedication of Monument
at Gettysburg, Pa., July 3d, 1889.

COMPILED BY THE SECRETARY,

D. A. O'MARA.

NEW YORK CITY, 1889.



“There are bonds of all sorts in this world of ours—
Fetters of Friendship and Ties of Flowers,
And true lovers' knots I ween ;
The Girl and the Boy are bound by a kiss,
But, there's never a bond, old friend, like this—
We have drank from the same Canteen.”

FIRST RE-UNION

—OF THE—

59th Regiment Infantry, New York Veteran Vols.

IT has well been said that the glorious days are waxing dim, and now it is only gray-haired men who remember Gettysburg, and grandchildren sit on the knees that marched to Antietam. Yes, the days grow dim, but the memories of them are as fresh as though the end came but yesterday.

Of all the volunteer organizations that participated in the sanguinary struggle of our nation to crush the great Southern Rebellion, there was probably not one more cosmopolitan in its character than the Fifty-ninth Regiment of New York Infantry. It was organized in the City of New York, and the companies were chiefly composed of strangers, who came to our recruiting tents in City Hall Park, and finding there others in a like condition, joined our ranks without hesitation. Men who have mingled in the world, know by experience that, in large bodies, people from the same neighborhood are apt to be clanish, and that strangers usually prefer strangers as more likely to become congenial companions.

It happened in this way, that our ranks were filled with men unknown to each other ; men of nearly every State and

nation of which a representative could be found elsewhere in the army. Among the members a dozen different languages were spoken and written, and a hundred different cities and countries received and read their straggling correspondence. And though close companions while the great struggle lasted, they had no other interest in common; their plans and purposes, beyond their present association, being as diversified as their homes were widely separated.

And so it came to pass, that, at the close of the war, when the remnant of our regiment was mustered out of service and disbanded, the individuals of which it was composed, separated and scattered in every direction. Some returned to their native homes, others to the homes of their adoption, and others to untried homes in the wilds of the West. And in a little while all had so completely disappeared, that subsequent efforts to organize the survivors into an association, though attempted twice or oftener, was attended with no satisfactory results.

But when the legislature of New York provided for the erection of monuments to the honor of all regiments from that State which had participated in the great battle of Gettysburg, another attempt became necessary. And as in every such case it devolves upon some one to take the initiative, and as no two survivors of the regiment could be definitely located, D. A. O'Mara caused to be inserted in all the "Soldier papers," and such other journals and magazines as favored our enterprise, a notice to the effect that the names and addresses of the survivors of that regiment were requested for the purpose of forming an association, having for its principal object the erection (under the laws of the State of New York) of a monument to perpetuate the memory of our comrades who fell on the field of Gettysburg.

One of the first responses came from our honored first Colonel, William Linn Tidball. The Colonel wrote very encouragingly, promising all the assistance in his power. Another early response came from Doctor William A. Olmsted, our last commander, who, from far away Colorado,

wrote earnest words of approval and encouragement. Then from Capt. Dapper, Grand Rapids, Michigan, came a long and welcome letter, full of reminiscences of our youthful days, with good words for his comrades and best wishes for the success of our undertaking. Afterwards other letters of a similar character were received, from Lieut. Col. Rugg, St. Paul; Maj. Purdy, Santa Fee; Capt. Lyne, Fort Wayne; Capt. Tidball, Chicago; Capt. Clarke, Fort Wayne; and many other survivors.

After the space of a few weeks, it was ascertained that our surviving comrades were very widely separated, but it was also discovered with the valuable assistance of Comrades Bell, Totten and Russell, that quite a number resided in this vicinity.

The first meeting, with notices to such as were within easy reach, was called for September 17th, 1888,—twenty-six years after the battle of Antietam. In response to that call ten comrades met and formed an organization, to be known as the "Associated Survivors of the 59th New York Veteran Volunteers." Comrades Rufus Bell, of Company K, and D. A. O'Mara, of Company D, were respectively chosen President and Secretary. It was agreed to assess each comrade \$1 00 to meet expenses of printing, advertising, postage, stationery and whatever else might be necessary. Capt. J. H. Stiner very kindly tendered us the use of his office for future meetings, and his offer was thankfully accepted.

At our next meeting, the following comrades were appointed a committee to communicate with the New York Commission on Gettysburg Monuments, procure a charter for the association, and receive designs and bids for the proposed monument: Col. W. L. Tidball, Capt. Henry Russell, Capt. J. H. Stiner, Lieut. Henry Totten, Rufus Bell and D. A. O'Mara.

At the next meeting, the committee reported that they had obtained a Charter, and the Secretary announced that he had been officially recognized by the Gettysburg Commissioners as representing the survivors of the 59th New York Volunteers. Several designs for the Monument were then

submitted, and after examination laid over for careful consideration.

As the 24th of November was approaching—that being the anniversary of our departure for the front—the comrades in this locality were invited to meet at the residence of Comrade O'Mara, in commemoration of that event. The following comrades were present, to wit: Tidball, Stiner, Bell, Baker and O'Mara.

In the meantime letters were received from Comrades in all sections of the country requesting that they be enrolled, and our list kept growing. At our next meeting it was voted to accept the design presented by Frederick & Fields, of Quincy, Mass. The contract was accordingly awarded the above-named firm with the agreement that it should be ready for dedication July 3d, 1889.

Circular No. 1, was then issued, setting forth the day of the proposed dedication and calling for contributions to assist in bringing our Comrades together. (Contributions received will be found under the head of Treasurer's Report.)

On the morning of July 2d, 1889, we met at the Pennsylvania Railroad depot, the following comprising the party:

Col. Tidball, wife and daughter, Mrs. Hinds, New York; Captain J. H. Stiner and wife, N. Y.; Lieut. Col. H. P. Rugg, St. Paul; Capt. Z. L. Tidball, Chicago; Capt. J. W. Clark, Fort Wayne, Ind.; W. N. Pratt, McComb, Ohio; J. Rapp, West Walworth, N. Y.; C. F. Dewey, Binghampton, N. Y.; C. I. Curtis and wife, East Haven, Conn.; Fergus Kelly and daughter, Birmingham, Conn.; John Bell, South River, N. J.; Wm. Milton, and niece, Miss Cass, Waterbury, Conn.; Geo. E. Ely, Ansonia, Conn.; Henry Totten, Rufus Bell and wife, J. M. Alexander, Julius Sebold, Henry Butts and wife; D. A. O'Mara, wife and daughter, N. Y.; John Helecker, Peekskill, N. Y., and J. H. McGill of the 69th N. Y., accompanied by Mrs. McGill, Comrades Hersch, of Peekskill, Curtis, of Ansonia, Conn., Rapp, of Brooklyn, visitors; and last, but not least, Rev. W. W. Gillies, whom we got

hold of at the last hour, and who proved to be an exceedingly pleasant traveling companion and valuable addition to our party. On our arrival at Gettysburg, we found awaiting us Comrades Ed. Wilkinson, who came from Rochester, N. Y., and W. H. Harrison, from Leavenworth, Kan.

We arrived at Gettysburg, about 6 P. M., and many of us drove at once to the field to have a look at the Monument. We were all agreeably surprised to find that it surpassed our expectations, and agreed that the design, workmanship and finish were excellent. We then repaired to our quarters, and after supper the Comrades met at the Eagle Hotel, where a business meeting was held. The meeting was called to order by Pres. Rufus Bell. The following letters of regret from Comrades were read by the Secretary :

Trinidad, Colo., June 26th, 1888.

Comrade D. A. O'MARA, New York :

My Dear Comrade.—

Your two last circulars, in regard to the 1st Re-union at Gettysburg received. I have delayed answering only because events since June 1st have interposed a serious bar to my going. The mines I am in charge of opened up two months before I expected, the Fort Worth road has an immense amount of cattle to move, which give me more work than I looked for at this time, and no man can leave his business in another's hands and have it done as he would desire.

Now, my dear Comrade, I have tried to push away every obstacle to be at Gettysburg—had all my passes in hand to start, and hoped I had cleared the decks for action, but fate detailed obstacles to prevent, and I am very, very sorry to say I can't be there, and feel it more than any of you expect. Still, you will have a good time and enjoy it.

Remember me to every one of the 59th. Ross—the great, big, large-souled, elegant soldier, stands out plainly to view. I would love to grasp his hand.

The lives of us all are examples to memory of what patriotism and courage can do, and when after we have passed along over the river many shall come up to say, "these men were true to their country." God bless you all, and may the God of battles ever keep you alive with faces always to the front watching along the line of attack, whether from foes without or foes within our country.

Yours in F. C. and L.,

WILLIAM A. OLMSTED, M. D.

Comrade Dapper wrote :

Grand Rapids, Mich., June 29th, 1889.

Dear friend and Comrade :

I am very sorry to record at this late date that it will be impossible for me to attend the dedication ceremonies at Gettysburg on July 3d, next.

It grieves me that I cannot clasp by the hand the brave survivors of that noble and gallant band, the 59th New York Vols.

It was a regiment, which has proven by its records to have rendered services in the late rebellion, second to none other.

Its rolls will show a very large number killed in action, wounded and taken prisoners.

It was officered by the bravest of men, some of whom are living and many of whom were borne to the other shore.

Brief mention might be made of the gallant services of Cols. Tidball, Rugg and Olmsted, but on this solemn occasion our duty calls us to remember the dead.

A more gallant soldier, a hero of Gettysburg, L't-Col. Max A. Thoman, could not be found resisting the attack of the rebel charge at Gettysburg. I hold in sacred remembrance the cherished words that fell from his lips as he lay upon the field mortally wounded : "Boys, bury me where I fell." And when the sun had set on that day the spirit of Col. Thoman had sped to its Maker.

I remember too well the many Comrades of our noble regiment lying upon the ground embraced in death, most of whom were in the enjoyment of the first flush of manhood. Like heroes imbued with patriotism and love for their country they stood their ground repelling the rebel assaults, without retreating or turning their backs to the enemy, until death claimed them as his own.

It is for those fallen heroes our regiment assembles once again. And may this country of ours remember the families of those fallen ones, as we remember our fallen Comrades, will be my prayer from henceforth.

God bless every survivor of the 59th, and God grant that at another Re-union of the Regiment, I shall meet with you and our Comrades. Give my love to all the boys, and tell them I love every living member of our regiment as though he was of my family.

Yours in F. C. and L.,

EMIL A. DAPPER,

Capt. Co. B, 59th N. Y. Vet. Vols.

 Oakland, Oregon, June 24th, 1889.

Mr. D. A. O'Mara :

Dear Comrade.—

I do not know when I have been so sad at writing any thing as this which I now feel compelled to write, viz.: That I find that I cannot be with you at our Re-union. I appreciate your kindness in offering to help me bear the expense, but find that my work forbids me to leave it, as I should be absent for a month. We are in the midst of a struggle to build a church. It is just being

inclosed and I must not leave it now. Were it not so, and did it not demand so much time, I should go; and it almost breaks my heart to decide no. I think of Thoman and Pohlman and others who fell beneath that terrible onslaught so gallantly repulsed, and must I be denied the sad pleasure of standing with you upon that hallowed ground baptized with their blood? God bless you Comrades! May He help us to stand shoulder to shoulder in the battle for the right, until for each of us the last conflict comes and we fall stricken, but victors. And God grant us each his eternal rest and peace through our Lord Jesus Christ—the “Captain of our salvation.”

Comrades! The sun is declining. Our day's march will soon be over. Our little tents will be pitched for the night. Fall in for roll call, then taps—lights out—all still, all asleep. But the day will break, the bugle will sound the reveille and we will fall in for roll-call once more. May that be a glad meeting for us all.

But I would not be sad. God bless you and grant you a glad good time.

Your Comrade,

ALGERNON MARCELLUS.

Newark Valley, Tioga Co., N. Y.. June 26th, 1889.

Dear Comrade O'Mara :

I am ashamed that I have not ere this answered your circular in one way or the other in regard to joining you in the Re-union and unveiling of the Regimental Monument of the 59th at Gettysburg on the 3d of July next.

But there were some things beyond my own control which delayed my decision, and I had to wait developments, hoping and fearing, until just at the last I have had to give up. I am very sorry to have to decide thus, for I was very anxious to meet the boys of the old 59th and once more strike hands. It may be the last opportunity. I have very many cherished reminiscences of the old days. It was a sad day to me when I parted from you to go to the 42d, though it was a promotion, and though I was to remain in the same command. I well remember my pledge made to Col. Thoman and to the regiment upon leaving you, that I would ever be ready and most happy to serve you. And I also remember that it was only too soon that at Gettysburg I had the sad opportunity to redeem that pledge. I well remember that so many of your regiment, including the Colonel, the Adjutant, and many other commissioned and non-commissioned officers of the 59th, as well as of the 42d, were under our care and my special attention at our 2d Division, 2d Corps Hospital. Oh how sad it made my heart that we could not save them all. Poor Colonel Thoman, we had to bury him there.

I wish I could have kept as good a record of the casualties in the 59th and the 42d regiments at Gettysburg and Fredericksburg, etc., as I was able to at the battle of Antietam. But my work at the operating table was so pressing that it was not possible. That was one thing in which the authorities at the field hospitals were very remiss, and we experience the effect of it now in looking up the record of those who are seeking for pensions. But this will be relieved somewhat when we get a Service Pension Law.

Please excuse this hurried letter. I want you to remember me kindly to all my old friends in the regiment. If I can be of any service to them, it will give me a great deal of pleasure. Possibly at the last moment I will find it so that I can meet you at Gettysburg, but if I find it so that I can meet you there, I will proceed direct from here.

Most sincerely and truly yours,

WM. J. BURR, M. D.,

Late Ass't Surgeon, 59th N. Y. Vols., Surg. 42d N. Y. Vols., and Acting Staff Surgeon, U. S. A.

Santa Fee, N. M., June 27th, 1889.

D. A. O'Mara, Esq.,

Secretary of the Associated Survivors of the 59th N. Y. Vet. Vols.:

Dear friend and Comradé.—

Until now I have cherished the good hope of attending the first Re-union of the Survivors of our old 59th Regiment, to be held upon the historic field of Gettysburg on July 3d, the 26th Anniversary of the great battle in which so many of our Comrades were slain or fearfully wounded and crippled for life.

There I expected joyously to meet and greet again many of my former Comrades in arms, for the first time since the Grand Review at Washington at the close of the war. Alas! I am doomed to bitter disappointment by imperative professional demands requiring me here at the time appointed for our re-union.

Having come to the far West I have not since the close of the war met any one of our old comrades of the 59th, nor did I know whether any one of them really survived, until the receipt of your printed roster of survivors and kind invitation to attend the Re-union.

It is not with simple regret, but deep sadness, that I am denied the inexpressible pleasure of meeting with you all on that memorable occasion—the coming together of our Comrades from far and near, after a separation for more than twenty-six years; and I regret it the more inasmuch as it will be the first assemblage. Of nearly two thousand men in all who served in our old 59th, alas, how few survive. Of those who parted upon the battlefield, or in hospital, or prison pen, or at the final muster-out of a quarter of a century ago how few will ever meet again in this world.

I trust that this will be only the first of many re-unions we yet shall have, and that it may often be my happy lot to join you therein. Grasp every one of our Comrades most cordially by the hand for me.

Ever faithfully and truly yours,

JAS. H. PURDY.

New York, July 3d, 1889.

DANL. A. O'MARA, 121 West High Street, Gettysburg, Pa.:

Eighty-second New York Infantry congratulates the Fifty-ninth Infantry on its duty.

J. W. DARBEY, Recording Secretary.

Hiawatha, Kan., July 14th, 1889.

D. A. O'Mara, Esq.

Dear Comrade :—Yours of June 5th, 24th, and Circular of July 1st, received.

In reply to the first, I think you did the very best you could for me in trying to assist me in getting to Gettysburg.

The one of June 24th, with enclosed medals, by some cause or other, I did not get till the morning of the 3d July. Well, it was a good reminder, for I thought of you and the little crowd all day, and how I wished I could have been there, and how I thought I could suggest affairs for the future. But after receiving your circular and reading it, I think you did one of the noblest things that could be done. There will be scenes shown up, names mentioned, and the different camps that have long been forgotten. I am pleased that Captain Dapper has undertaken such a work. It will be interesting to read, especially to an old soldier of the 59th and his family, and it has interested me so much that I have been busy for some time past assorting a pile of old letters—about 100 in number—which I wrote during the war from Fort Alexander to the final round up. I think, too, it will be beneficial to those applying for pensions.

On receipt of the medal I was greatly elated, for I think it is a beauty. Did not have it engraved as requested—only my name on the pin, and Co. H, N. Y. Infantry around the circle with the 59 in center.

In conclusion, I cannot find words to express my thanks for the kindness you have done me, and at any time when there is any small remittances needed, do not for a moment hesitate, but let me know at once, and I shall endeavor to do my part if possible.

Yours in F. C. and L.,

J. L. BECHTEL.

Comrade E. A. Dapper was chosen as historian, and Comrades Bell and O'Mara were re-elected President and Secretary respectively. It was agreed to hold the next Reunion at Antietam, September 17th, 1890. A vote of thanks was tendered to the Officers and to Comrades Totten and Russell for assistance in working for the Association.

The Secretary was instructed to prepare a circular for distribution among the survivors, requesting them to become members of the Association, on payment of \$1.00 initiation and \$1.00 annual dues.

The meeting then adjourned.

On the morning of July 3d we took carriages for the battle-field, and proceeded direct to the spot where Thoman

fell. We were accompanied by the survivors of the 2d Conn. Battery, who had come to Gettysburg for the same purpose.

The comrades and friends having formed themselves in a semi-circle in front of the monument, President Bell introduced the Rev. W. W. Gillies, who opened the ceremony with prayer. The monument was then unveiled by Miss Dottie O'Mara.

President Bell, after the people present had evinced their surprise and delight, addressed them as follows :

Comrades and friends :—Twenty-six years ago, to-day, we stood on this field in a very different attitude from that which we now assume, and with a widely different purpose in view from that which brings us here on this occasion. We were then here to assist in the defeat and overthrow of those who were engaged in an attempt to dismember and destroy our country. We are here to-day to honor the memory of our comrades, thirty-four of whom fell on this spot. This mass of granite will tell their story to future generations.

I now take pleasure in introducing to you Capt. Z. L. Tidball, who will read a poem expressly written for this occasion.

Capt. Tidball prefaced his recital with the following remarks : The poem which I am about to read, was written by a member of this organization, whose physical condition is not equal to the effort required for its proper enunciation. The subject, now a brilliant page in American history, is one with which you are all familiar, and the incidents, among the proudest and saddest of your lives, will waken anew some of the keenest of your many personal recollections. The poem is entitled—

PICKETT'S CHARGE.

The second day was at the close,
 The troops were weary, worn and sad ;
 Too weary to enjoy repose,
 And not a hope to make them glad ;
 For still the battle raged amain,
 From Rock Creek to the Devil's Den ;
 For still the shot and shell like rain,
 Fell in the midst of valiant men ;
 Who, fighting, fell, and, dying, pray'd
 The enemy might be dismay'd,
 And under cover of the night,
 Seek safety in retreat or flight.

At length the armies, overdone,
 But neither ready yet to yield,—
 Each soldier, resting on his gun,—
 Bivouac'd upon the battle field ;
 And there throughout the cheerless night,
 In constant dread of an assault,
 We watch'd the foe, prepar'd to fight,
 Assur'd that we were not in fault,
 And ready to deal deathful blows,
 To shield our friends, and crush our foes,
 And save our country, intact, free,
 A blessing to posterity.

The third day came, cloudless and bright,
 Each living soldier firm in place,
 And ready to renew the fight,
 And crush the foe in deep disgrace :
 Yet no one knew what was in store
 For those who fought on that dread day ;
 The conflicts of the days before,
 Compar'd with that were children's play ;
 Repuls'd so oft, the foe at length,
 Rashly concenter'd all his strength,

In one grand effort, far and near,
To pierce our lines and gain our rear.

At midday everything was still,
And had been for an hour and more
In front of Cemetery Hill,
When suddenly the deafening roar,
Of rebel canon filled the air,
With sounds that even brave men dread,
With cruel missiles every where,
Which change the living to the dead ;
And soldiers by the hundreds fell,
Some pierced with shot, some crushed with shell,
All ready, bravest of the brave,
To perish thus, their land to save.

The object of the cannonade,
For a short while remain'd in doubt,
Then a most furious rush was made,
And desp'rate men, with savage shout,
By the intrepid Pickett led,
The flower of old Virginia's flock,
Garnett, Kemper and Armistead,
Fell on us with terrific shock ;
Line after line moved on apace,
Across the intervening space ;
Line after line approach'd the wall,
Not there to falter, but to fall.

The point in view, "The Clump of trees,"
Made famous in historic page,
They aim'd to reach, that to the breeze,
They might unfurl the gaudy gage,
Which they had flaunted in our face,
From Sumpter's fall to that dread hour,
Defying force, despising grace,
And self-assured of greater power,

Greater endurance, greater skill,
 Greater courage and greater will,
 Than Union soldier e'er possess'd,
 From ocean east, to ocean west.

There never was a charge so bold,
 In any war, in any land;
 Never so many men, all told,
 Engaged in conflict hand to hand;
 Along the line of the advance,
 So thick the dead lay all around,
 A man might pass, and scarce by chance,
 Allow his foot to touch the ground:
 Along the wall, and just in front
 Of Hancock's Corps, which bore the brunt
 With gallantry none could excel,
 A thousand gallant warriors fell.

More gallant men were never known,
 Than those who met that famous charge;
 More willingness was never shown
 By other men in the discharge
 Of the great duties which devolve
 On every soldier in the strife,—
 To battle with a firm resolve,
 To conquer or to lose his life;
 And thousands on that fatal day,
 Striving to keep the foe at bay,
 Fell in the places where they stood,
 And died in pools of patriot blood.

Between the famous "Clump of Trees"
 And "Bloody Angle" in the wall,
 The Fifty-ninth (reduced to these,
 By battles past), six scores in all,
 Stood forth directly in the way,
 And strove together, might and main,

The fierce and furious foe to stay,
 And drive him o'er the wall again;
 And of that little gallant band,
 Upon the spot where now we stand,
 Many brave men were stricken dead,
 The gallant Thoman at their head.

At length the foe, with joyful shout,
 Broke through our line and onward sped,
 No longer having any doubt
 That he would win with Armistead;
 But crushed and bleeding, not dismay'd,
 Our soldiers, rallying from the shock,
 Another battle-line display'd,
 And stood, unflinching as the rock,
 And quickly every thing revers'd—
 The rebel leader falling first;
 His foremost followers, dying—dead,
 The rest, disheartened, turn'd and fled.

The battle of that day was done,
 The desp'rate charge was at an end;
 Of all the foe there was not one,
 With strength to battle or contend
 For any favor—any right,
 Except the privilege to flee,
 Not in retreat, but rapid flight,
 From danger, death, captivity;
 There never was such a defeat,
 And never such a wild retreat,
 Never a greater battle won,
 Never a greater service done.

At the conclusion of the poem, the President said:

I now take pleasure in introducing the orator of the day,
 Colonel William Linn Tidball, by whom our regiment was
 organized, and by whom it was first commanded.

Col. Tidball, from a sense of propriety, confined his remarks on this occasion, to what pertained exclusively to the regiment, and to the deeds and doings of our army in which it participated. The following is the oration :

Comrades, Ladies and Gentlemen :

It is with mingled emotions of pleasure and pain that we meet together on this occasion after the lapse of more than quarter of a century. There is great gladness in our hearts as we clasp the hands of old Comrades with whom we shared the privations and perils of war. But there is also deep sorrow as we glance along the line of wrinkled visages, and note the many vacant places once occupied by our chivalrous companions. And the sting of our grief is only lessened by the reflection that they died in the discharge of their duty and for the glory of their country.

In most respects the story of our regiment does not differ from that of other volunteer organizations. There was first the fever of patriotism and the desire to do something useful for our country. There was next the uncertainty of our duties and distracting doubts as to their proper performance. And then there was the mistaken notion, which especially prevailed among those of patriotic impulses, that the first to reach the front and face the enemy would be entitled to the highest consideration.

This mistaken notion with which every volunteer organization was more or less affected at the outset of its career, manifested itself almost offensively on more than one occasion in the history of our regiment. The spirit of unrest was prevalent in our organization even before its satisfactory completion. And when at length the order came to march, there was cheerfulness in every countenance, alacrity in every motion, and joy unspeakable in every heart.

For a time the novelty of camp life and the attractions of the Federal City were quite enough to satisfy an ordinary curiosity. The construction of Fort Baker and other portions of the vast line of fortifications surrounding the city supplied

us with ample and satisfactory employment. And later on the occupancy of the Northern Defences, from Fort De Russe to Chain Bridge, with daily drill in the tactics of heavy artillery, afforded us a new sensation, and diverted our minds into a new channel of usefulness.

In this wise we spent the first months of our service, with as much content and cheerfulness as was consistent with our situation. But the beauties of the Capital and the attractions of the surrounding country, though unique and unexcelled in time became familiar and palled upon the appetite. The construction of field works, the occupancy of forts and batteries, and the drill and tactics of heavy artillery, at length grew monotonous and wearisome. And notwithstanding that our duties were constant and important, they were not sufficient to satisfy our conscientious scruples, much less to gratify our ambitious aspirations.

There was a reason for our discontent which, though not entirely justified, can not be altogether condemned. The mistaken idea that where the greatest danger is there is also the highest duty, was still prevalent in our midst. No one seemed to be conscious of the fact that his foremost duty was that to which he was assigned by authority. The duties of a soldier are many in number and varied in character, and one however humble, is as binding as another however exalted. But when the battle rages no valiant man at arms prefers to stand guard at the door of a hospital or over the stores of a commissary, and though he may faithfully discharge the duty to which he is assigned, he will ever regret the opportunity of which he was deprived.

There was another reason for our discontent which, though based upon a misconception, exercised an influence that was uncontrollable. New regiments from the North and East arrived at the seat of government, passed into Virginia over the Long Bridge, and disappeared in the direction of the enemy. It was not then understood, at least by those who thought themselves most deeply interested, that our regiment, drilled in the tactics of infantry and artillery, was accounted

a most valuable auxiliary in the defense of the Capital. An erroneous report got into circulation, to the effect that our regiment was kept back by undue influence, or that other regiments were advanced by unwarranted favoritism; and daily thereafter every spirited soldier, as at reveille he left his bunk or his blanket, turned his eyes longingly toward the country south of the Potomac.

I remember well when the call was made for troops from Washington to support our army on the banks of the Chickahominy, against the overwhelming force and irresistible attack of the enemy. News of the onslaught fell upon the city with the suddenness of a thunder-clap, and the force of an avalanche. The people were startled from their sense of security and overwhelmed with the dread of a great calamity. It was noticable however, that in the midst of the fear and confusion which prevailed among the citizens, the soldiers were cool, collected and confident. In our regiment the old spirit of unrest manifested itself anew, and nearly every enlisted man in the enjoyment of health was eager to join in the sanguinary struggle for supremacy. A majority of the officers were equally anxious, and at a meeting held to consider their duty under the circumstances, expressed a desire that our regiment might be included in any troops designated for the relief of our army. And when it was known that the order of deliverance had been so changed as to include our regiment, the joy of all hearts burst forth afresh and the air was filled with vigorous and long-continued acclamations.

When I look back to that event and recall the joyfulness of that occasion, I am irresistably influenced by emotions of the highest admiration. There was not at that time in the whole service of our country, a volunteer regiment more highly favored than our own in all that constitutes the ease, comfort and safety of soldiers in time of war. Our duties, after the completion of the fortifications, were never arduous or unpleasant, our liberties were never unreasonably restrained, and our enjoyments were never unjustifiably circumscribed. We were quartered in the Northern Defences

of the city, drilled in the use and management of great guns, and confident of our ability to resist any attack of the enemy. We had been promised a change of service and a continued residence in the forts and batteries which we then occupied. And above all, we were not included in the first order issued for the relief of our suffering army, and so were under no special obligations.

But in utter disregard of all these substantial advantages, not only present but promised and prospective, a very large majority of our regiment preferred the dangers of the battle field. Indeed they seemed to think that, in being kept in the defences of Washington, they were grossly ill-treated and unjustly deprived of an opportunity to strike a blow in defense of their country.

Untried soldiers are never quite satisfied with the ease and comfort of a camp in safety, when there is an enemy and danger to be found in any other quarter. A little sensible reflection would enable them to see how impossible it is to face a courageous enemy and not be in danger of death. But if they ever give the subject a thought, it is coupled with the hope that, whoever else may suffer, they will escape. They never anticipate the danger to which they are exposed, but only the glory which attaches to valor and to victory.

It is seldom that a civilian has any just conception of the duties and dangers incident to the life of a soldier. Even the soldier himself is unable to realize the requirements of the service in time of war, until he has grown familiar with them by actual experience. But of one thing he is well assured after the first battle in which he is engaged, that there is no certain escape from the consequences of a deadly conflict. Where bullets and bayonets are used, a loss of life and limb ensue, and sometimes of liberty.

No soldiers in the service realized these truths more fully than those of our regiment. From the ease and comfort of garrison duty, we went directly to the front and engaged in all the stern realities of cruel combat; and from that day to the end of the war, we knew nothing but duty and danger and

deprivation. There was the march and the counter-march, the camp-guard and the picket-watch, the bivouac and the battle, in all of which we participated. And I regret to add that, during our long service, we supplied more than our relative proportions to the hospitals, the rebel prisons, and the battle cemeteries.

It is safe to say that no other regiment in the service of our country underwent greater or more frequent vicissitudes. Beside those of drill and duty already mentioned, we experienced nearly every honorable change to which a regiment could be subjected. We entered the army with more than a thousand as good men as ever stepped to martial music. Our losses by disease and discharge were very great, and by death in battle almost unprecedented. When our numbers fell below the minimum, vacancies for a while were filled with recruits and conscripts. But the greed of war was greater than our resources, and in time, though the demand continued, the supply utterly failed. After that the vacancies remained, the ranks closed up, and the companies dwindled well-nigh to platoons. When so diminished as to render consolidation necessary, our regiment was reduced to a battalion. At the end of three years, the term for which we were mustered into service, the able-bodied survivors of our organization volunteered anew, this time for the period of the war whatever its duration. Subsequently our battalion was augmented by the addition of the 42d New York Volunteers and the 82d New York Volunteers, and it was then raised again to the position and importance of a regiment. And this was the

“Last scene of all,
That ends this strange, eventful history.”

As a regiment we served to the end—the surrender of Lee at Appomatox—the disbandment of the army of volunteers. It would not be just to the truth of history, or consonant with our present emotions, if I failed to here allude to the many battles in which our regiment was engaged. According to the official report of the Adjutant-General of the

State of New York, we participated in no less than three-and-twenty general engagements, to say nothing of skirmishes and chance encounters. How much damage we inflicted on these several occasions is not known, and is not knowable. And it is better so, as such knowledge would be worthless for any purpose other than personal gratification; and now that the war is over and the country saved, it would not afford us even a pleasurable emotion. It is enough to know that—

“Who does the best his circumstance allows,
Does well, acts nobly; angels could no more.”

But I venture to say that, from first to last, few regiments suffered more at the hands of the enemy. In the battle of Antietam alone, according to the official accounts, we sustained a loss of 48 killed, 153 wounded and 23 captured, in all 224 men. Our reported loss of officers, 3 killed and 10 wounded, was only equalled by the reported loss of one other regiment; but of our wounded, 7 were fatally injured, so that our loss of officers by death was actually greater than that of any other regiment in that battle.

A fact well-worth our notice and remembrance, and withal somewhat remarkable as a coincidence, is to be found by a comparison of the figures contained in the official report of that battle. The 2d Army Corps, in which we served, suffered a greater loss than was sustained by any corps in that engagement. The 2d Division of that corps, in which we served, suffered a greater loss than was sustained by any other division in that corps. The 3d Brigade of that division, in which we served, suffered a greater loss than was sustained by any other brigade in that division. And, to cap the climax, our regiment suffered a greater loss than was sustained by any other regiment in that brigade.

Before the great Southern Rebellion, the gallant charge of the Light Brigade at Balaklava, was renowned in song and story as the most brilliant exploit in history, and the loss on that occasion as the most murderous ever sustained in battle by a single organization. But that event, however remark-

able! however transcendent! is no longer entitled to pre-eminence, as in our war very many regiments suffered greater loss in single engagements, and instead of resting afterwards, as did the Light Brigade, continued to fight to the close of the war. For example, our own regiment which, in the battle above mentioned, lost more by death according to the number of men engaged, as eighteen to sixteen per cent., and by wounds a much greater number, and yet afterwards fought in no less than twelve general engagements, including the very last battle of the war.

In the quarter of a century which has elapsed since the close of the war, Death has been busy among those who survived the hospital and the battle-field. The very sick and the badly wounded, with few exceptions, have long since gone to swell the great majority. Of the many hundreds who once answered at our roll-call, barely one-fifth are alive at this day, and less than one-twentieth are present on this occasion. Of the survivors, a few are enrolled in the list of pensioners, and a few others, unable to make the difficult proof required by the Pension Bureau, are suffering what they feel to be the dishonor of dependence, or know to be the pinching pangs of poverty.

It cannot be said that our government has been illiberal in the award of pensions. But it is well-known that our pension laws, strictly construed as is the custom, does not reach every case worthy of consideration. There are instances in which the exact proof required cannot be produced, owing to the death of the only witnesses to whom the facts were known. Would it not be humane, in cases of this character, all other essential facts having been proved, to so modify the pension laws, or the rules of the pension bureau, as to include these meritorious exceptions?

Of course there would be opposition to any such increased liberality on the part of the Government. There is always in time of war a class of non-combatants, who manage by hook or crook—by the desertion of their homes, or the procurement of substitutes, or in some other way

equally unpatriotic—to escape the duty and the service which they owe to their country. And there is always in the years of security which follow a war, a large proportion of the population—not always the descendants of the cowardly shirks just mentioned, though men of the same narrow views and niggardly propensities—who envy the poor old soldier the pittance which government doles out for his bare subsistence.

The few facts here mentioned must suffice for this occasion. It might not be amiss, perhaps, were I to add a few words of encomium. It would be gratifying, for it is but natural that men should be proud of their achievements in the service of their country. But—

“I came to bury Cæsar, not to praise him.”

The occasion of this assemblage to-day is the dedication of this beautiful monument erected by the State of New York to the honor of the 59th New York Volunteer Infantry, and especially to the memory of those who fell in the great battle which crowned our struggle with immortal victory. It is a most pleasing duty, though saddened with emotions of regret and sorrow for those who sacrificed their lives at the very threshold of their manly existence. May they rest in peace forever!

It is almost certain that this is the last time we shall ever meet together in this wide world. We are all now on the downward slope of life—some of us decayed, others of us decrepit, and all of us more or less diseased and damaged. It is not therefore within the range of human possibility that we should ever again share together the melancholy enjoyment of such another convocation. Some of us may meet occasionally as we totter down the declivity of existence, possibly on some other battlefield which we helped to win, but the great majority of us, when we come to part this day, will scarcely fail to realize that it is our final separation.

May we all go hence grateful for the life and strength which have enabled us to pay this last worthy tribute to the

memory of our departed Comrades. May we carry with us to our distant homes, pleasant recollections of the joy and sorrow of this memorable occasion. May the remnants of our lives be spent among friends, with tender hearts to soothe and sympathize, kind words to alleviate and encourage, and soft hands to smooth away the wrinkles of our affliction. And may we all

“So live that when our summons comes to join
 The innumerable caravan which moves
 To that mysterious realm where each shall take
 His chamber in the silent halls of death,
 He may, . . . sustained and soothed
 By an unfaltering trust, approach the grave,
 Like one that wraps the drapery of his couch
 About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.”

Col. Tidball's address was listened to with the utmost attention. The Colonel, and all present, were deeply affected.

The following address was then delivered by Captain J. H. Stiner :

Comrades, Ladies and Gentlemen :

I thank God that I am spared to meet with you here on this sacred spot to-day, but how sad is the recollection to me when I look at this small band. When the call was issued by the lamented Lincoln, how prompt did the men who belonged to our regiment respond.

It was with light hearts that the boys took up their march to the Camp at East New York, and from there to Washington, to Good Hope, Second Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Bristoe Station, Mine Run, Wilderness, Spottsylvania, Petersburg, Strawberry Plains, Deep Bottom, Reams' Station and Boydton Road.

In July, 1864, the remnants of the 42d and 82d regiments New York Vols., were consolidated with the 59th. Even then we were numerically weak.

I will never forget the march of the boys up Broadway at the close of the war, with the tattered battle flags of the regiment and the brown faces of those who were spared by the God of battles; and yet when I looked and missed the old familiar faces of many who were mustered with us, I felt as if those who were spared deserved the plaudits of the American people.

The regiment participated in more battles and engagements than the majority of those in the service. At the battle of Gettysburg, Col. Max Thoman commanded a battalion composed of 4 companies, and the total number of men in the engagement was 120; there were killed and wounded 34 enlisted men and officers.

Can you ever forget the words of poor Thoman who fell so gallantly at the head of his command—"Boys, bury me on the field."

He never flinched when duty called. His sword was ever ready and his men were eager to follow their brave leader. No midnight call of the long roll was needed, as they were always ready for the march or the battle.

Look at these old tattered flags, that were the emblems of our faith in the supremacy of the government under which we lived. When we see that old flag again we shed a tear in memory of the heroes who fell and died that our country might live.

May the memory of those who sleep the sleep of death and who died on the battlefield be ever with us a bright page in the history of the 59th regiment. May we, the survivors of this regiment, ever remember with pleasure the great deeds of valor and brave acts of those who participated with us in the great conflict. Let us who remain here ever remember this day, and may the youth of the land emulate the bravery and grand deeds achieved by those who helped to save the land of their birth from destruction.

Let us each year strive to keep up the fraternal feeling of Comradeship. Let us, who are here to-day ever remem-

ber with pride the Comrades of our late regiment, and may we all meet again.

This grand Monument is dedicated as a grateful remembrance of deeds of valor performed by the old 59th Regiment of New York Volunteers.

Address of Lieut.-Col. H. P. Rugg :

Comrades and Friends :

I esteem it the greatest privilege of my life to be enabled to stand on this historic ground at this time, to address even a few words to you.

It is hard to realize that on the spot where stands this beautiful block of granite and its immediate vicinity was enacted, 26 years ago, a scene that proved to be the turning point of the war. It was here that the backbone and even the sinews of the Rebellion were broken. Had Pickett succeeded in driving our forces from this Ridge, the fate of war might have been different. How well he tried is evidenced by the sight of yonder stone erected on the spot within our lines—just over the corner of the coveted stone wall—where his most gallant subordinate, Armistead, fell.

All fame to Grant, all honor to Sherman and Sheridan, but to our noble Commander General George G. Meade and his brave army belong the honor of this great victory—a victory that turned the hordes of the enemy back to its native soil for the last time.

Our own regiment—to whose fallen heroes we have gathered together to-day to dedicate this monument—performed fully its own share in this famous action.

Some of its best blood was shed on this field. Here our own most gallant commander Max A. Thoman gave up his life's blood. In speaking of reminiscences, where was a greater subject for reminiscence than he?

The "Jack of Diamonds," as he was most affectionately called. He was certainly a *jewel* among diamonds. He was beloved by all, and I have yet to hear the first word of any-

thing but praise and admiration for his bright and happy disposition.

On other fields we lost our Stetson, Whitney, Reynolds, Wade, Moody and others too numerous to mention, but none were ever held in more affectionate regard than noble Thoman.

The war is over and fast fading in the distance. Let us cherish its memories ; let us keep up our Association as long as life lasts us, and until the very last, when we too shall be gathered together in the army of that great silent majority, to which this battlefield so largely contributed.

Address of Captain J. W. Clark :

Comrades and Friends :

I feel that this is one of the happiest moments of my life to be with you to-day to honor the memory of our former Comrades. I was not in action on this field with the 59th, having been wounded at Antietam, but my heart was with them, as it is to-day. I well remember Colonel Thoman, and a braver soul never faced an enemy. This beautiful stone marks the spot where he fell—marks the spot where he stood—and he stood as firm as this monument, as immovable, until stricken by a bullet from the charging enemy. It is a sad yet pleasant duty we are performing to-day—sad in the memories it calls up—pleasing, when we consider the glory that was won here. When I go from this field I shall carry with me memories of this visit that I will cherish while life lasts.

In closing the order of exercises Pres't Bell transferred the Monument to the Battlefield Association.

The Monument was accepted by Mr. J. B. McPherson on behalf of the Battlefield Association.

Rev. W. W. Gillies pronounced the benediction.

The comrades and friends were then driven over the entire field, under the guidance of Col. Long, who delivered a lecture at every point of interest. These lectures were very instructive, affording a true idea of the character of the great battle.

The afternoon was spent by most of our comrades in attendance at the dedication of the monument of the Second Connecticut Battery—an interesting ceremony. With the evening came the first separation. Col. Rugg, Capt. Stiner and Capt. Tidball had engagements in New York which required their immediate departure. Col. Tidball, whose brother was his guest, felt himself constrained to bear them company; with these went Mrs. Stiner, Mrs. Hinds and Mrs. Tidball, the last of whom was personally and agreeably known to nearly every soldier in the regiment, having spent several months with her husband in camp at Tennallytown.

The evening was enjoyed at headquarters in doing what old soldiers usually do when they meet after a long separation. It is one of the pleasures of their later existence to go back in memory to the days spent in military service. The presence of comrades often recall incidents which have grown dim in the distance; and on this occasion many loomed up again as vividly as on the day of their occurrence.

But the evening was not exclusively devoted to reminiscences, though many of unusual interest were related, for we had among us some good story tellers. But we had also some very excellent singers, among whom Rufus Bell, John Heleker and Ed. Wilkinson, may be especially mentioned. Their old war songs carried us back twenty-five years, and stirred us with such emotions as to cause us for the time being to forget the intervening period.

The next morning, as we were to leave Gettysburg at 9 o'clock, many of the comrades were away before breakfast to take another look at the monument. It was the glorious Fourth. The first comrade to separate from us was Wilkinson, "Ed"—as we familiarly called him in the regiment. He was encircled by his comrades, who sang from their hearts "Should Auld Acquaintance be Forgot;" and it is not discreditable to say that, not only himself, but all who were present, were affected to tears.

Captain Clark, who was wounded at Antietam, left with a promise to join us on that field at our next re-union. Com-

rade John Bell left us with the same promise, as also did comrades Rapp, Dewey, Pratt and Harrison. Comrades Kelly, Ely, Curtis and Milton were delighted with the pleasures of the trip and the prospect of another early re-union.

Comrades Bell, Totten, Heleker, Alexander, Butts and Sebold, by their efforts, contributed largely to the success and pleasure of the occasion, even our visitors, comrades McGill of the 69th New York, comrade Curtis of Ansonia, Conn., and comrade Herschel of Peekskill, requested that they be kept informed of our doings, that they might be with us on some future occasion. And the Rev. Mr. Gillies, whom all sincerely thanked for his services, at parting invoked Divine blessings on us all.

As for the ladies, they all thoroughly enjoyed the trip, and their presence certainly added very much interest to the occasion. Mrs. Curtis, Mrs. Bell, Mrs. McGill, Mrs. Butts and Mrs. O'Mara were outspoken in their praises of the pleasant experiences enjoyed. The young ladies, Miss Kelly and Miss Cass were equally pleased, and "Dottie," in years to come, will remember with pride and pleasure the kindness received from everybody.

The minor details are entered into merely to foreshadow the gratification our comrades may expect to enjoy, should they be present at our future annual re-unions.

Having agreed that our next assemblage be at Antietam, all who attend may also enjoy a visit to the battlefield of Gettysburg, which is perhaps the most attractive of all the fields of human conflict upon the face of the earth. Hotel accommodations being deficient in the vicinity of Antietam. Gettysburg will be the rendezvous, as by rail the distance can be covered in two hours. On this subject more definite information will hereafter be communicated.

In conclusion, comrades, it is hoped that many more pleasant fraternal gatherings may be vouchsafed to the survivors of the Fifty-Ninth New York ere the final muster.

Fraternally yours,

D. A. O'MARA, *Secretary*

ROSTER.

Fifty-Ninth Reg't, N. Y. Vet. Vols.

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